

Soldiers train for historic deployment

Contingent is Wyoming's largest ever sent to war.

By Brandon Quester

*Public Affairs Specialist
Wyoming National Guard*

CAMP GUERNSEY, Wyo. – As nearly 1,000 Wyoming Army National Guard Soldiers prepare for the state's largest mobilization since the Korean War, local facilities were utilized for official training requirements to leave, as the command says, "with no Soldier untrained."

Soldiers from the Wyoming Army National Guard's 115th Fires Brigade performed and qualified on rotating shifts, for three weeks at a time, to complete annual training for the upcoming mobilization at the National Guard's Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center, in Guernsey, Wyo.

Since the implementation of a 12-month total deployment restriction, National Guard and reserve components of the U.S. military must complete the majority of pre-mobilization training at home. Luckily for Wyoming, Camp Guernsey serves as a multi-faceted facility to offer different training qualification resources.

The three week exercises served both as the Soldiers' annual training and early preparation for the pre-deployment instruction scheduled at Fort Hood, Texas.

According to Capt. Scott Gromer, 115th Fires

"Now it's geared toward what our deployment is going to be," said Capt. Scott Gromer. "You can go over ther and hit the ground running."



Photo by Brandon Quester

Pvt. 2nd Class Chad Meken, A Battery, 2nd Battalion, 300th Field Artillery, attempts to qualify with an M-4 rifle using tracer rounds on the evening of March 10, at a Camp Guernsey qualifying range.

Brigade Headquarters – Headquarters Battery commander, the efficiency of the process was improved. He said that as a result, Soldiers were able to accomplish all necessary requirements in a timely and effective manner.

Another important aspect of this process, Gromer said, was the unit trains itself.

"That has been very practical for this deployment," he said. "It was good to tailor the training to our specific unit. Our NCOs stepped up."

Taking advantage of the Army's crawl, walk and run instruction, Soldiers were able to qualify on tasks ranging from the Combat Life Saver course to road checkpoint security and convoy operations.

Soldiers also qualified as individuals and groups, firing simulated weapons as well as live ammunition on day and night ranges.

Gromer said each unit outperformed its expectations during exercises at Camp Guernsey and

**See training
Page 8**

Wyoming National Guard news briefs

Gasdek named Legion of Valor commander

Barry Gasdek, a Wyoming Veterans Commission state veterans service officer, was recently selected to serve as the Legion of Valor national commander.

The Legion of Valor is a national veterans service organization whose membership consists of recipients of the Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Service Cross, the Navy Cross, and the Air Force Cross.

Gasdek was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for extraordinary heroism on Sept. 22, 1968, in the Republic of Vietnam.

Airmen return from AEF missions

The Wyoming Air National Guard completed its Air Expeditionary Force mission in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The personnel and aircraft returned late March through early April.

The mission called for people and equipment to relieve personnel currently serving in Bagram.

Wyoming Airmen from the 187th Airlift Squadron, 153rd Maintenance Squadron, among others are due home this week.

Airmen from the 153rd Civil Engineering Squadron and the 153rd Security Forces Squadron are still deployed.

243 ATC wins national awards

The Wyoming Air National Guard's 243rd Air Traffic Control Squadron was named the D. Ray Hardin Air Traffic Control Facility of the Year 2008. This is the second award in four years the squadron has received.

Barry Dishman was selected as the Randall D. Headrick Special Achievement Award recipient, a National Guard Bureau award.

Master Sgt. Jay E. Hollman was selected as the Terminal Instrument Procedures Specialist of the Year.

Camp Guernsey recognized for excellence

The Wyoming Army National Guard's Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center won the FY09 Army Community of Excellence Special Category.

The mission of the ACOE program is to optimize a quality environment, excellent facilities, and excellent services.

Performance and productivity are enhanced within an installation/community that instills pride and imparts a sense of accomplishment and purpose among its people. The ACOE program recognizes excellence in installation management.

Wing receives DoD Family Readiness award

The Wyoming Air National Guard's 153rd Airlift Wing was selected for the 2008 Department of Defense Family Readiness Award.

For its accomplishment, the unit was presented the award, Feb. 13, in the Pentagon Hall of Heroes, in Arlington, Va.

Wyoming Airmen receive awards

Capt. Kevin R. Schrank, of the Wyoming Air National Guard's 153rd Medical Group, was selected as the Air National Guard recipient for the 2008 Air National Guard Annual Medical Awards.

Airman 1st Class Latrice M. Stovall, of Cheyenne, Wyo., a member of the Wyoming Air National Guard's 153rd Logistics Readiness Squadron, was named the 2008 Traffic Management Airman of the Year.

153 OSF wins Air Force award

The Wyoming Air National Guard's 153rd Operations Support Flight was awarded the United States Air Force Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Agency's 2008 Outstanding Operation Support Squadron/Intelligence Unit of the Year Award.



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Airmen take integration to heart

By Brandon Quester

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On March 17, with two simple words, the integration of the first active-duty associate squadron marked a new milestone in Wyoming's military history.

Shielded from the wind in the corrosion control hanger at the Wyoming Air National Guard base and hidden beneath the massive expanse of tail number 11653, a group of friends and fellow service members gathered as witnesses.

With the loading door to the C-130 Hercules lowered to the ground, five individuals stood within its open hull. The focus, however, centered on the two Airmen who stood facing each other, hand-in-hand, in their finely pressed "blues."

Those huddled at the base of the cargo door peered and listened as the ceremony flowed through the usual cadence and tradition. As the moment progressed, eyes began to water, smiles broadened.

Then, with the culmination of prayers and promises, the Airmen said the two words that all had gathered to hear, "I do."

The integration of the Wyoming Air National Guard's 153rd Airlift Wing and the United States Air Force's 30th Airlift Squadron became a literal partnership with the marriage of Tech. Sgt. Robert Carlson – active duty, and Tech Sgt. Amber Mellen (now Carlson) – Air Guard.

Before the exchange of vows, the active-duty and

guard units were linked through the first-ever active associate squadron in 2006, marking a partnership between Air Mobility Command and the Wyoming Air National Guard. The Wyoming Guard's 153 AW provides operational support and aircraft to the active-duty 30 AS crews.

Robert was one of the first 30th Airmen to begin duties in Cheyenne, moving here in August 2006.

Less than a year later, he was introduced to Amber through a mutual friend. Two days after meeting, Robert and Amber went on their first date.

"It just kind of clicked basically," Amber said. "Everything has fallen into place perfectly."

Amber said they both "kind of new immediately" that their relationship was going to work. The couple quickly realized they liked the same music, same television shows, and even had similar personalities.

Less than three months after their first date, Robert proposed to Amber while on a brief vacation to Colorado.

Robert said when he informed his commanding officers of his proposal to Amber, they jokingly told him he had taken the integration idea "a little too far."

But in reality, the command staff of each unit was happy to see the integration not only prove successful on a strategic and operational level, but through personnel as well.

"Eventually this was going to happen with the active associate," said Col. Dennis Grunstad, the Wyoming Air National Guard's 153rd Airlift Wing commander. "I thought it was really cool."

Grunstad said the successful integration of active-duty and guard units has been an interesting partnership that continues to evolve. And with the partnership now expanding on a personal level, he said leadership within each unit must figure out how such interactions will affect individual Airman and the processes for moving forward as an organization.

That support was echoed in Tuesday's ceremony where the Carlson wedding was attended by members of Wyoming's military family, within an aircraft that helps to support its overall mission.

Included in that family was the Wyoming Air Guard's ground safety manager, Senior Master Sgt. Aaron Smith – also known as "Stoney."


Smith, an ordained minister and friend of Robert and Amber, led the marriage. "They came to me and said, 'Stoney, we're gonna get married on St. Patrick's Day.' It was the first time (I've performed the ceremony) in the back of a C-130." 



Photo by Brandon Quester

Tech Sgt. Amber Mellen and her soon-to-be husband, Tech Sgt. Robert Carlson, pray with Senior Master Sgt. Aaron Smith - an ordained minister, during a wedding ceremony inside the tail end of a C-130 Hercules on the Wyoming Air National Guard base in Cheyenne, Wyo., on March 17, 2009. Also shown here is ring-bearer, Hunter Raney, 10.

Airmen recognized at annual event

Members of the Wyoming Air National Guard were recognized for their outstanding service during 2008, at a formal banquet Jan. 10.

"It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to recognize these outstanding individuals," said Col. Dennis Grunstad, 153rd Airlift Wing commander. "They represent the ideals all of us in the Wyoming Air National Guard believe, people first, mission always."

The following individuals were recognized for their leadership, military bearing, knowledge of military customs, community service and personal achievements.

Senior Airman Olivia O. De La Torre, Airman of the Year.

Staff Sgt. Monte C. Medina, Noncommissioned Officer of the Year.

Master Sgt. Brandi L. Matzek, First Sergeant of the Year.

Master Sgt. Shane S. Larson, Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year.

Capt. Michelle R. Mulberry, Company Grade Officer of the Year.

Senior Master Sgt. Carl Hocking was chosen as the Flag Team Member of the Year.

This award is a symbol of the extreme amount of volunteerism and undying commitment a Flag Team member must possess.

Master Sgt. Daniel Lyon, Tech. Sgt. Lewis Garza, Tech. Sgt. Jeremy Mullin, Tech. Sgt. Nancy Winter, Staff Sgt. Elias Camargo, Staff Sgt. Victoria Lopez, Staff Sgt. Bruce Scheel, and Senior Airman Ann Fitzgerald were named as the Chiefs Council Core Value Award recipients.

This award recognizes the junior enlisted members of the Wyoming Air National Guard who best represent the Air Force/Air National Guard Core Values: Integrity first, Service before self, Excellence in all we do, Commitment to Citizen Soldier heritage, and Strength of our diverse family.

Master Sgt. Lynette K. Kelley was recognized as the Unit Career Advisor of the Year.

The Unit Career Advisor plays a key role in promoting the careers and opportunities of our military force, from the youngest Airman to the most seasoned senior noncommissioned officer.

Tech. Sgt. Milton D. Fitzgerald was named as the Top Recruiter of the Year for the Wyoming Air National Guard. Tech Sgt. Mark E. Hill was selected as the Rookie Recruiter of the Year.

These awards recognize the recruiters who continue to go above and beyond and whose individual efforts and support have been a contributing factor in this organization's ability to meet its missions.

Agency Web sites receive new look

The Wyoming Military Department will have a new look on the World Wide Web beginning in April.

The three main agency sites, the Wyoming Military Department, Wyoming Army National Guard and Wyoming Air National Guard sites have received comprehensive overhauls in design and content.

More comprehensive information for Wyoming veterans will be available on pages devoted to veteran benefits, including information for reaching the state's veterans service officers.

The Wyoming Air National Guard's 153rd Airlift Wing's updates include a new address and quicker navigation to other Air National Guard and U.S. Air Force pages.

Agency contact information has been expanded to include frequently sought after number like Family Readiness, TAG Records, contracting and human resources.

The 153rd's site is up and running; the other two agency Web sites will transfer to their new looks soon.

Some links may change, but the main address will provide access to all three Web sites and the pages contained in them.

Comments about content and design are welcome and can be provided via each site.

Wyoming Military Department:
<http://www.wy.ngb.army.mil>

Wyoming Army National Guard:
<http://www.wy.ngb.army.mil/army>

Wyoming Air National Guard:
<http://www.153aw3ang.af.mil>



Soldiers award employers

Wyoming Army National Guard Soldiers have spent much of the last three months - if not longer - preparing to leave Wyoming for a one-year mobilization for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The Wyoming Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve has spent much of the last three months - if not longer - helping the Soldiers and their civilian employers prepare for the deployment, as well. Part of that preparation included processing hundreds of Patriot Awards, at the request of the Wyoming Soldiers.

Hundreds of Soldiers took time during our processing events to nominate their civilian employers - and, in many cases, their spouses' employers - for the prestigious award.

The Patriot Award can only be presented to civilian employers of National Guard and Reserve members or their families if the Soldier, Airman, Marine or Sailor, wants it to happen.

"Having so many Wyoming Army National Guard men and women nominate their employers for

this award show how highly the Soldiers think of the support and sacrifices of their civilian employers," said Laura Jeffrey,



WyESGR executive director.

The Patriot Awards will be distributed to WyESGR volunteers around the state to be presented in the upcoming months to civilian employers.

Those same employers will be invited to attend the upcoming WyESGR bosslift to Fort Hood, Texas, to view the Wyoming Army National Guard Soldiers during pre-deployment training at that location.

Bosslifts are a unique opportunity for civilian employers to gain a better understanding of the military training requirements that take their employees away from them.

Invitations to the June 1-2 event will be sent to every employer who was nominated with a Patriot Award.

"We're excited to offer our Wyoming employers a chance to view the training for this historic deployment," Jeffrey said. "We'll send the bosses down on a Wyoming Air National Guard C-130 and ensure they can see as much Soldier training as possible in the short window of time we have."

WyNG history sought

Have you deployed with the Wyoming National Guard in support of the Global War on Terror?

If you have, you should know the Wyoming Guard now has a full-time historian.

Officer Candidate Dan Molineaux is responsible for collecting photos, stories and anything that documents our overseas deployments and contributions to the Global War on Terror.

He is working to continue the documentation of this history and is interested in gathering additional items relating to Wyoming's military record in conflict.

Molineaux is also helping to update previously documented artifacts currently on display in Cheyenne.

Historical items we're seeking include:

Photographs
Personal histories

Mementos
Uniform items

If you would like to see what the Wyoming Guard has accomplished from the earliest days of our existence, you are invited to view the collected artifacts held at the Wyoming National Guard Museum, located on Pershing Blvd., in Cheyenne.

The museum displays thousands of unique Wyoming National Guard artifacts, covering our history from the 1870's to present-day.

The museum has a renovated interior, including eight display rooms showcasing historical uniforms, artifacts, photographs and original transcripts from military orders and deployments.

There are also static displays outside the museum and an ever-growing inventory, covering all areas of the Wyoming Guard, including the Army and Air Force.

We are in the process of digitizing much of the records held at the museum for easier public display.

We are happy to arrange tours of the museum and welcome any memorabilia current and former members of the Wyoming Guard would like to have kept at the facility.

Please come by for a tour and view the achievements of the Wyoming military members who built the Wyoming guard into what it is today.

Questions about the museum or how to donate historical items can be directed to O.C. Dan Molineaux, at (307) 772-5266.

Recruiters intro Guard Experience

By Pfc. Meredith Vincent

197th Public Affairs Detachment

CASPER, Wyo. – More than a dozen high school and college students from the Casper area gathered with family and friends at the end of January to participate in GX Night: The Guard Experience, at the Wyoming National Guard Armory in Casper, Wyo.

Designed as an informational event, GX Night brings recruiters together with potential servicemembers and their families. Many families have questions and concerns about their loved ones joining the military.

“The Guard Experience allows people to come in and experience what the Guard has to offer,” said Staff Sgt. Marty Frank, the recruiting and retention noncommissioned officer for the Casper area. “It’s an informal process in which we come in and tell people the benefits and the features of what the Wyoming National Guard can do for them.”

Frank said parent and family involvement is a crucial step to the enlistment process. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend these events, as well as other family and friends.

“When I sit down and discuss enlistment with a high school student, I give them information about the Guard and what we’re all about,” Frank said. “But the next step is sitting down with mom, dad or the guardians, because we don’t proceed without that. We want to have the parents’ input, and we want to know what the family thinks about this commitment.”

Currently the United States is engaged in armed conflicts in two parts of the world. Naturally, parents and loved ones are concerned with the inherent dangers to any military obligation. The recruitment staff at the Wyoming National Guard work hard to put these concerns at ease.

Frank and Staff Sgt. Matt Adams, the assistant recruiting and retention noncommissioned officer, are new to the recruitment team at the National Guard Armory. Frank said they have their own particular approach to finding people who are interested in the military.

“The one thing the Guard does which is a little different than the regular Army is we don’t go pounding down doors and making cold calls,” Frank said. “We take a look at our target market and audience and those people who are looking at our information and then we go and approach them. It’s a little different style because we are designed

as members of a community, so we try to keep that community environment.”


Education opportunities were a main highlight of the evening’s events. Casper resident Melissa Heck said she was impressed by the availability of college programs and scholarships.

“I’m trying to find a different way to get through school because regular college didn’t work out for me,” said Heck. “My dad is in the Guard and my boyfriend, who is interested in the Guard, brought me here trying to convince me into it.”

Recruit Sustainment Program members were on-hand to answer questions throughout Thursday’s event. As Soldiers who have already taken their oath but are still waiting to attend training, these members brought insight and experience to the interested recruits.

Pizza and refreshments were served during the working presentation, which involved a slideshow and several different speakers. Attendees were given gift bags with more information on the Guard, plus a list of job opportunities in the state.

The annual GX Night at the Casper Armory is a unique opportunity for recruiters to get their message out to the community.

“I was kind of skeptical before,” said Heck. “But after hearing from all the different points of view, now I’m pretty interested.” 

Deployment Ceremonies set

Deployment ceremonies for the largest Wyoming Army National Guard deployment in history have been scheduled. Ceremonies will include remarks from unit commanders, Maj. Gen. Ed Wright and Gov. Dave Freudenthal.

Soldiers and their families should check unit instructions to determine which event to attend.

April 17: 2 p.m., 115th Fires Brigade deployment, Storey Gymnasium, Cheyenne.

April 19: 2 p.m., 2-300th Field Artillery deployment ceremony, Casper Events Center, Casper.

April 21: 2 p.m., 960th Brigade Support Battalion deployment ceremony, Casper Events Center, Casper.

For more information, call (307) 772-5253.

Streamlined SRP prepares Soldiers

**By Cadet Richard Bennett and
Spc. Jeanne M. Chamberlain**

197th Public Affairs Detachment

To prepare the 115th Fires Brigade for their upcoming deployment, the Wyoming National Guard has organized multiple Soldier Readiness Program events throughout the last couple of months.

Maj. Shane C. Crofts, the Wyoming mobilization readiness officer, said three SRP events have taken place, each involving between 200 and 300 Soldiers.

In addition to attending an SRP one year prior to deployment, Soldiers must complete the process again 90 days before heading overseas, Crofts said.

"Mobilizations are 12 months total now," Crofts said. "Before, units that mobilized would spend four to five months at their mobilization station before actually deploying"

After mobilization time, units were then required to spend 12 months in theater. This process resulted in 16- to 18- month deployments, which represented a considerable strain on Soldiers.

When the Army limited reserve component deployments to 12 months, this meant Soldiers spent considerably less time in theater, and consequently, called for reinforcements to mobilize with more frequency.

"The (960th) Brigade Support Battalion will spend only two months at the mobilization station," Crofts said.

In addition to the standard SRP regiment, Soldiers are encouraged to bring spouses or parents. Unlike previous deployments, the Fires Brigade is also conducting what it calls a Family Academy and Benefits Fair.

This event was traditionally held during the post-mobilization phase of SRP, but was moved to the pre-mobilization phase, Crofts said.

For example, Sgt. Rory Norberg, a mechanic with the B Company, 960th BSB, came to the SRP with his mother.

During the Family Academy and Benefits Fair, Soldiers and family members are presented with many different classes and benefits briefings.

The classes include financial awareness – which includes information on such financial matters as balancing a checkbook, and information about how family members can access support programs provided through the Guard.

The benefits portion of the program deals primarily with community programs geared toward veterans support and is conducted by organizations such as the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The previous SRP iteration took place during the first weekend of January, Crofts said.

"The feedback has been positive. At the last meeting we had 178 spouses in attendance, which is a record. Having the spouse informational meeting with the pre-mobilization is a good fit," said Crofts.

Still, Norberg worries about junior enlisted Soldiers going through the process for the first time.

"Communication from command to the new Soldiers, who are deploying for the first time, is essential," Norberg said. "Many of them do not know what paperwork is going to help them get through the process."

"A checklist for these new Soldiers would help. They need their bank account information, dependent information, marriage certificates etc., and many of the new Soldiers did not realize that was necessary for today."

This was Norberg's tenth SRP in five years. Although visibly drained at the end of the day, he appreciated that the process was more streamlined and efficient than his first deployment in 2005.


Norberg noted there were three chaplains and two mental health professionals at this SRP, which helped to speed up the overall process.

"Having the extra staff kept the stations from getting bottle necked," Norberg said.

For this deployment, Norberg has six Soldiers in his section.

"We stayed together through the medical portion but branched off so that everyone could get through all the stations in one day," he said.

And although the process is not a popular experience for those involved, it represents a necessary component to deployment procedures.

"Sometimes SRP has a negative connotation with Soldiers. People have gone through this process many times, but its purpose is really to take care of people and that is important," Crofts said. 

"Having the extra staff kept the stations from getting bottlenecked,"

Sgt. Rory Norberg said.

Legislative actions favor Wyoming military

Wyoming lawmakers turned a favorable eye to the Wyoming Military Department's 2009 legislative initiative, passing all but one bill.

Favorable actions include:

The Wyoming National Guard Youth Challenge Program will be allowed to use its full state appropriation, if necessary, if the program's federal funds are depleted.

Deployed military personnel who, in their civilian capacity, are first responders and contribute to a public or private retirement system, can have up to \$5,000 of their retirement contributions covered during a deployment.

The Military Assistance Trust Fund, originally established by the legislature a few years ago, was increased by \$1 million to cover the anticipated increase in need by Wyoming military families during the upcoming deployment of the Wyoming Army National Guard's 115th Fires Brigade - the largest in the state's history.


The Wyoming Veterans Commission gained funds to hire three mobile service officers who will provide

statewide outreach.

The Oregon Trail State Veterans Cemetery received additional money to purchase necessary equipment to ensure safe, professional and dignified handling of remains at the cemetery.

The Wyoming National Guard will provide maintenance support for howitzers keeping the east entrance of Yellowstone National Park open in winter.

Recognizing the need for quality medical coverage in the state, legislators agreed to reimburse medical malpractice insurance premiums for Wyoming medical professionals who serve two or four years in the Wyoming National Guard.

The only bill not passed was one seeking to retain and expend the money generated by grazing fees on Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center land. The camp has the potential to generate about \$300,000 per year in grazing fees. The Wyoming Military Department would have used those fees to fund land improvements at the camp. The bill's failure means the department will need to seek that money through its state budget request. 

Guernsey training prepares unit for OIF

From Training that Soldiers can now prepare for mission-specific training at Fort Hood.
Page 1

"Now it's geared toward what our deployment is going to be," Gromer explained about the upcoming training in Texas. "You can go over there and hit the ground running."

One of Guernsey's newer training simulators is the HEAT trainer, or, Humvee Egress Assistance Trainer, which teaches service members how to exit a Humvee after a rollover incident.

Staff Sgt. Steve Stienike from Nebraska's 192nd Military Police detachment, helped train Wyoming Soldiers at Guernsey as part of the pre-mobilization training assessor's element, and said the HEAT trainer is an effective training tool.

"I very much enjoy helping out the Soldiers," Stienike said. "It could literally save their lives."

Stienike added that the HEAT trainer familiarizes Soldiers with a rollover situation, "so, if it does happen, it's not the first time it's ever happened."

"If the situation calls for it, the Soldier can handle it," he said.

Still, the training at Guernsey goes beyond skills and qualifications. The time Soldiers spend together also helps to build camaraderie and trust. Staff Sgt. Troy

Crump with the B-Battery, 2nd Battalion, 300th Field Artillery, said that although his squad is young, they have shown impressive abilities while working together as a team.

The squad received high praise from trainers after completing convoy maneuvers that ended with a simulated medevac operation. Crump said the unit had great communication and will only continue to improve as a group.

The upcoming trainings at Fort Hood, he said, will further this squad's mission as a successful group of highly trained Soldiers.

For now, however, Soldiers from the brigade will spend time with their families before their mobilization officially begins with pre-deployment training in Texas.

From Texas, the group will deploy to Kuwait and Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Soldiers will perform convoy security, manage forward operating bases and plan security both physically and logistically to ensure the protection and implementation of military operations throughout the region.

The Wyoming Guard's 115th Fires Brigade and its subordinate Wyoming units will be joined by units from Alabama, Colorado, Minnesota and South Dakota, with a total force of more than 2,500 Soldiers. The deployment is scheduled for one year. 